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T H O S E who have lately Conform'd,

F R O M T H E

U n c h a r i t a b l e C e n s u r e s

O f a P A M P H L E T, entitled,

*Some OBSERVATIONS upon the present State of the Dissenting Interest, and the Case of Those who have lately deserted it.*

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Who art thou that judgest another Man's Servant? to his own Master he standeth or falleth: yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. *Rom. xiv. 4.*

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L O N D O N :

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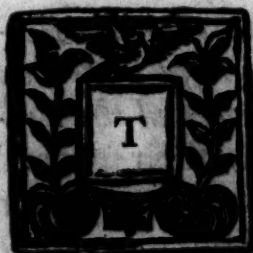
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A BRIEF

## VINDICATION, &c.



THE late Decay of the dissenting Interest has given some Persons a strange Itch of Writing, which possibly may be catching; and should it spread thro' the whole Body of their Ministers, I am far from being uneasy or envying them the Pleasure of Scratching. Had the Author of a late Pamphlet entitled, *Some Observations upon the Present State of the Dissenting Interest, &c.* confin'd himself to his own Party, and not laid his hands too rudely on others, who had no such Humour to be allay'd, he and all that shou'd have follow'd his Steps, might have remain'd undisturb'd, and enjoy'd the agreeable Sensation of rubbing themselves till they smarted again, without any Interruption from me. His Calculation of the Numbers

bers of those that have Conform'd, <sup>a</sup> and at what Age <sup>b</sup>, may be nicely true for any thing I know; possibly he has kept a Register of them, since he esteems the dissenting Interest to be of so very great Importance<sup>c</sup>. And, forasmuch as he desires it should be so, the loss of fifty Ministers in sixteen Years time, shall be readily allowed him to be no such mighty matter. Whether the Decay of the dissenting Interest be local or general; whether the Reasons he assigns for its being local only, are sufficient or insufficient; whether his Friends are justly blameable or not, in those things he lays to their Charge; and the Advice he bestows on them is proper or improper; it no ways concerns me, nor shall I give my self or the Reader the least Trouble about it. The general Character, he is pleas'd to give of those who have left the Dissenters, is <sup>d</sup> *that they are Persons of very considerable Merit, in respect of their natural and acquired Endowments, and the Probability of their Lives.* I call this their general Character, because afterwards comes a Division of them into Younger and Elder; but it's possible I may be mistaken, and he may mean this only of a few; for he puts it faintly enough, *some of these Gentlemen*; so that whether he speaks it of the greater part, or of two or three only, is wholly uncertain. The particular Description which follows, of those who conform'd when Young, and of those who have conform'd in the middle of Life, betrays no little Prejudice and Partiality. However, had this been all, I had been entirely silent. There are several Expres-

<sup>a</sup> P. 10.<sup>b</sup> P. 6.<sup>c</sup> P. 21.<sup>d</sup> P. 4. prope fin.



fions dropp'd here and there in this Pamphlet, which if they amount not to direct Charges of Insincerity and Dishonesty, approach as near it as may be; and I am sure are very strong Intimations of a criminal Conduct, in their having comply'd with the Establishment<sup>e</sup>. " It can hardly be that they can Conform from " a Sense that is their Duty so to do; only they " can make a shift to make it easy to themselves. <sup>f</sup> " I fear, whether in some cases, Interest is not the first Mover in this Change. <sup>g</sup> " Some of our young Ministers have not Patience to stay till Providence gives them an " Opportunity of fixing among us; and are " unwilling to take up with any but the most " considerable of our Pulpits. <sup>h</sup> Disgust at the " Conduct of a Neighbour, a Friend, a Minister, has thrown some into the Bosom of the " Church; by which they think they take a " Revenge upon the whole Party; and indeed " in most Cases, when men do conform, they " do it in a Pet. <sup>i</sup> Some have Conform'd merely because they did not know what they " did. <sup>k</sup> Interest, Resentment, Pique, Rashness, &c. may lead a Man to do many " things, which his professed and cool Sentiments will not so well square with. <sup>l</sup> This " can lay a Man under no manner of Obligation to Conform. He may live usefully, and " obtain a Subsistence, in many civil Nations, " with much more Honour both to his Integrity and to Truth. And it will certainly " give him much better Reflections to do so,

<sup>e</sup> P. 12. prope fin.<sup>f</sup> P. 14. prope init.<sup>g</sup> P. 18.<sup>h</sup> P. 36. prope fin.<sup>i</sup> P. 37.<sup>k</sup> P. 8.<sup>l</sup> P. 9.

" than



“ than to manage himself, and strain a Point,  
 “ in order to comply with what he does not  
 “ thoroughly approve of. This Author seems  
 “ to profess, that he will <sup>m</sup> keep within the  
 “ Bounds of Justice, Modesty and Christian  
 “ Love; and says <sup>n</sup> he has no design to cast any  
 “ invidious Reflections upon any.” Are the  
 Passages I have quoted to be reconcil’d with  
 such Professions? Are not these Reflections in-  
 vidious? Can they be consistent with Christian  
 Love? Is not this entering the Heart, and  
 taking upon him a Province infinitely above  
 him? Has he forgot, who hath said, *Judge*  
*not, that ye be not judged; for with what, &c.*  
 Has he need to be told, that others have the  
 same Right to Conform, that he has to Dissent;  
 and that they have just the same Reason to con-  
 demn him for Dissenting, as he has to censure  
 them for Conforming?

May they not with equal Justice say of him,  
 that he continues a Dissenter meerly from the  
 Force of Education, or Interest, or because he  
 knows not what he does? Can he not see that  
 the Censure he passes upon them, arises wholly  
 from his own Prejudices; and that he judges of  
 the State of their Minds, and their way of  
 Thinking, meerly from his own? True, in-  
 deed, had they now all the same Prejudices  
 against the Church of *England* which they  
 may be suppos’d formerly to have had, and  
 which he seems still to retain, it might with  
 truth be said, “ It can hardly be that they  
 “ can conform from a Sense that it is their

<sup>m</sup> P. 4.

<sup>n</sup> P. 17.

“Duty so to do.” But have they not declared that they have laid aside their Prejudices, that they see Things in another Light, and that it is with entire Satisfaction to their own Minds, that they have conform’d? How then can this be asserted of them with any Shadow of Truth, or the least Appearance of Charity? He often represents the Dissenters as the greatest Friends of Liberty; but if, like him, they pass such unwarrantable Censures on those who differ from them, may it not be most justly said, “They must excuse us, if we think they “forget their own Principles when they are “thus censorious; and that we look upon “them as the weakest Friends that Liberty “has, and the least to be depended on?” There are other Things in this Writer no less contradictory the one to the other, than are these ill-natured and uncharitable Reflections to his own avowed Design and seeming Profession. Having spent a whole Page<sup>b</sup> and more, to convince those among the dissenting Ministers who may have an Inclination to conform, that there’s little Prospect of worldly Gain to induce them to it; a few Pages after<sup>c</sup> he asserts great Emoluments are to be expected by them in the Establishment.

In one Page<sup>d</sup> the Temptation to Conformity (*i. e.* all the Motives to Conformity of

<sup>a</sup> P. 8.

<sup>b</sup> P. 13.

<sup>c</sup> P. 18.

<sup>d</sup> And yet, though this Number is so small, I must frankly acknowledge I cannot help admiring that it has been so great; for, in my Mind, after having view’d the Case all round, the Temptation to Conformity is very weak, and a Man must have a pretty strong Bias that way, before he can find out any sufficient Reason to justify it to himself, p. 10.



every kind, for that is what he endeavours afterwards to prove) is very weak. In another<sup>e</sup> one single Motive has the Epithet of great join'd to it. In the former, when he has view'd the Case all round, all the Motives that can be thought on, are but a very weak Temptation. In the latter, when he has mentioned but three of these Motives (or, more properly, one Motive with two subordinate Considerations to heighten it) they appear to him a formidable Temptation. In the former, when he has view'd the various Motives all round, the Temptation is so very weak, that he can't help admiring that the Number of those who have conformed has been so great; in the latter, the united Force of three only appears so considerable, that he is under a Surprize the Number is so small. How gravely does this Author wonder that the same thing is and is not! Perhaps this is his Method of communicating to the World that he has learnt the Philosophy to wonder at nothing.

Having thus proved his Inconsistencies, I shall next shew, That the Inconsistency wherewith he charges several of those who have lately conform'd, is not in their Conduct, but in his Imagination only, arising altogether from the Prepossessions of his own Mind. <sup>f</sup>“ It has

<sup>e</sup> And indeed, considering the great Emoluments to be expected in the Establishment, the small Provision in most Places for dissenting Ministers, and the Moderation profess'd among us with respect to the Points in Difference, it is nothing extraordinary (*i. e. it is not to be admir'd*) that in such Numbers as are educated amongst us, some shou'd go over to the Church; it is rather surprizing there are no more, *p. 18. prope fin.*

<sup>f</sup> P. 7.

“ been



“ been a pretty common Case, he says, to find  
 “ some of those who have talked loudest on  
 “ the side of Liberty, and against Impositions  
 “ of every sort, going off from us to the Esta-  
 “ blishment. This I am apt to think will ap-  
 “ pear odd and inconsistent enough to most  
 “ considering People — It will be an hard  
 “ matter to understand how Men that see and  
 “ are convinced of the Unreasonableness and  
 “ destructive Tendency of Impositions, can  
 “ consistently, with their Eyes in their Head,  
 “ deliberately submit to them.” Which Sub-  
 mission, he insinuates, is a contributing to the  
 Support of a Power usurped over Conscience.  
 The whole of this rests upon the Supposition  
 that they still retain the same Prejudices against  
 the Church of *England* which they formerly  
 had, and which he himself is so full of. Were  
 they convinced that those Things which he  
 calls Impositions, are destructive of true Reli-  
 gion, or that by submitting to them, they con-  
 tribute towards the criminal Support of a  
 Power usurped over Conscience, he may be  
 very sure they wou’d never have comply’d.  
 Whilst they were persuaded that the Terms  
 of ministerial Conformity were unlawful, no  
 wonder they spake against the Imposition of  
 such Terms; but when upon a closer and more  
 candid Examination of that Matter, they saw  
 Reason to alter their Sentiments, and were ful-  
 ly persuaded that the Terms insisted on were  
 lawful, they thought it their Duty to submit;  
 and this have they done without deserting  
 the Interests of Liberty in the least. They  
 remain as great Friends to Liberty as ever.  
 They always did, and I doubt not ever will

contend against all Force in Matters of Conscience. They think Religion ought to be every Man's own free Choice; that what is not so, cannot be properly called Religion; that if Liberty is in any Case valuable, it must needs be so in an Affair of such infinite Concernment. At the same time they humbly hope, not to be themselves debarr'd the Exercise of that Liberty which they are so strenuously pleading for, as the natural Right of all. God forbid that any Man shou'd be compell'd to the Use of such religious Ceremonies which his own Judgment tells him are unlawful. He that thinks he cannot comply without Sin, let him dissent. On the other hand, he that esteems them no ways sinful, and thinks it his Duty to comply, why shou'd he be hinder'd? If this Writer be for censuring such because of their Compliance, are not the Censures he passes on them due to himself? And how loudly soever he extols that which seems to him the Cause of Liberty, “<sup>s</sup> There  
“ will be too much room to say, that there is  
“ a great Difference between talking for Li-  
“ berty, and being heartily and thoroughly in  
“ its Interests.”

And now I am upon the Subject of Liberty, I think this a proper Place to make a Remark or two upon what he says in another Part of his Book. “<sup>h</sup> Our dissenting is a publick, so-  
“ lemn Protest against all human Power and  
“ Authority in the Concernments of Religion;  
“ ——— a solemn Disclaim of human Mixtures

<sup>s</sup> P. 7. prope fin.

<sup>h</sup> P. 21, 22.



“ and human Authority in the Things of Re-  
 “ ligious.—Our Cause is one with the Cause  
 “ of Liberty civil and ecclesiastial. Our Fore-  
 “ fathers have all along made noble Stands,  
 “ especially against all Incroachments upon re-  
 “ ligious Liberty, and the Progress of spiritual  
 “ Tyranny.” A few Sentences after, he ac-  
 knowledges that some of their Forefathers  
 were too apt to favour Encroachments up-  
 on Conscience. And indeed, if I am not  
 greatly mistaken, whenever and wherever they  
 had the Power, shew’d themselves errant Ty-  
 rants. They made noble Stands against spiri-  
 tual Tyranny when themselves suffer’d by it ;  
 and exercis’d it as nobly when they had an  
 Opportunity to make others suffer. It’s true,  
 many of the present Generation of Dissenters,  
 blame the Proceedings of their Forefathers,  
 seem to have different Notions of Liberty from  
 what they entertain’d ; and I am persuad-  
 ed, shou’d it ever be in their Power, wou’d not  
 follow their Steps. What then? Does it fol-  
 low from hence, that their Cause is peculiarly  
 the Cause of Liberty? By no means. Their  
 Forefathers pleaded for Liberty, but meant it  
 only for themselves: They neither intended  
 nor desir’d it for those who differ’d from  
 them in what they esteemed great and essen-  
 tial Points. And this is all that, with any  
 Shadow of Reason, can be suppos’d to be im-  
 ply’d by dissenting.

A Man by separating from the established  
 Church, sufficiently expresses his Desire of en-  
 joying his own Opinion and Way; but this is  
 no Declaration that he desires the same Liberty  
 for



for others who may differ from him. There are Multitudes among the Dissenters, who are still in the same narrow Sentiments with their Forefathers, possibly near one half of their whole Body. Many indeed have more Catholick Principles, and have pleaded well for universal Liberty of Conscience ; but is this peculiar to them ? Many in the Establishment have profess'd themselves in the same Sentiments, and have wrote full as satisfactorily on the same Subject. Or is this necessarily imply'd in their dissenting from the Church Establish'd ? If so, all Dissenters must be in this generous way of Thinking ; whereas it's certain, great Numbers of them are not. I cannot, for the Heart of me, apprehend how the dissenting Cause is one with the Cause of Liberty ; except there be a necessary Connexion between dissenting, and being in the Interests of Liberty. That there is no such Connexion, is abundantly demonstrated by what he himself confesses of his Forefathers, and by numerous Instances among the present Dissenters. " Our dissenting (he says) is a solemn disclaim of " human Mixtures, and human Authority, in " the things of Religion." It is, if he pleases, a disclaim of those which they esteem human Mixtures in the Church of *England*, and of the Authority which enjoins them ; but of no other. He well knows that the three Denominations accuse each other of such Mixtures. The Anabaptist tells both the Independent and Presbyterian, that they have human Mixtures ; they join in retorting the same upon the Anabaptist ; nor do they give each other much better Quarter. And for my own part, I know  
not

not well how it is possible for any Society of Christians, in this imperfect State of things, to subsist without some human Mixtures, either in Doctrine, Discipline or Worship ; and that Man who by his Dissent, will disclaim all such, must stand alone and join himself to none. “ Dissenting (he says) is a publick, solemn Protest, against all human Power and Authority in the Concernments of Religion.” That it is so against the Authority which has enjoin’d the Rites of the Church of *England*, I acknowledge ; but against all human Power and Authority in matters of Religion it is not. For whilst they retain human Mixtures among themselves, they submit to that Authority whatever it be, which has appointed them ; and I cannot see, but that the conforming to the Establishment, is as much a publick Protest against their particular Appointments and Authority, as their Dissent is against the Ceremonies of the Church ; and that the Cause of Liberty is equally concern’d in the one Protest as in the other. The Plea which he has put into the Mouths of those, who have lately Conform’d, is so Misrepresented and Perverted, that, I dare answer for it, h’ell find none who will own it ; and the Explication which follows it uncharitable with a Witness.\* “ They usually say, that as they cannot continue their Ministry amongst the Dissenters, without submitting to some Hardships and Impositions, therefore they think it is better to do it once for all, where there is some show of Authority for requiring it ; namely, in the

\* P. 8.



“ Establishment : ” The plain *English* of which  
 is this ; “ that as in some points of Divinity,  
 “ they are in different ways of thinking, from  
 “ the generality of the common People, they  
 “ must either smother their Thoughts on these  
 “ Heads, or belye them ; or else it may be  
 “ lose the Favour of their Hearers, and conse-  
 “ quently their Usefulness among them ; and  
 “ therefore they will take a bold Leap once  
 “ for all, and belye their Sentiments with a  
 “ witness, by solemnly declaring and subscri-  
 “ bing as true and Christian Doctrine, what in  
 “ their Consciences they are convinced is not  
 “ so.” It is very possible, when they have been  
 dinn’d with the Sound of Hardships and Im-  
 positions intolerable in the establish’d Church,  
 they may have reply’d, and that very proper-  
 ly, that they cou’d not continue amongst the  
 Dissenters without submitting to various Hard-  
 ships and Impositions : But to imagine that  
 they gave this Reason seriously, as the true  
 Ground of their Conformity, I never can ; at  
 least not those of them who are as he describes,  
 Men of Parts and Probity. And indeed since  
 he ascribes this Plea to those who have talk’d  
 on the side of Liberty, (for it is of them he is  
 speaking,) we must, I think, conclude that he  
 esteems none of them to deserve so good a  
 Character : But whatever his Thoughts of  
 them may be, I hope their own Conduct will  
 always prove them such. One part of his  
 Misrepresentation lies in this, That what they  
 design’d only as *argumentum ad hominem*, a per-  
 tinent Reply to those Dissenters who objected  
 to them the Hardships and Impositions to be  
 submitted to in the Church, he speaks of as  
 2 having



having been the effectual motive to their Conformity. Whereas a small degree of Charity, wou'd have inclin'd him to believe, that had they not been first convinc'd of the Lawfulness of submitting to all the things impos'd, they never wou'd have done it.

The Hardships and Impositions amongst the Dissenters, which he refers to in this Plea, he cou'd not possibly suppose to have been any violent Temptation to Conformity; because immediately after he makes it clearly appear, that they might have been easily evaded. Without straining his Charity therefore he might have hop'd that they had not been hereby prevail'd on, to act contrary to the Dictates of their Consciences. And indeed it is but a Page and a half after this, that he says, <sup>p</sup> "In my mind, after having view'd the Case all round, the Temptation to Conformity is very weak." These Impositions among the Dissenters are certainly one part of the Case (tho' it must be own'd a very inconsiderable part of this Case) which he affirms he has view'd all round: How very little then must this Gentleman's Charity be, who can persuade himself, that so small a part of a very weak Temptation, cou'd induce these Persons to *belye their Sentiments with a witness!* I very well know that several of those who have conform'd, were as little uneasy from such Impositions as any among the dissenting Ministers now can be.

Another part of his Misrepresentation consists in these Words, "They think it is bet-

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“ter to do it (*i. e.* submit to Hardships and  
 “Impositions) once for all, where there is  
 “some Shew of Authority for requiring it;  
 “namely, in the Establishment.” It is very  
 probable, when talking with Dissenters upon  
 the Subject of Conformity, and urged by them  
 with the Impositions of the establish’d Church,  
 they might add to their foregoing Reply, That  
 since there were Impositions among the Dis-  
 senters themselves, they wou’d chuse rather to  
 submit to such as were enforc’d by the Law of  
 the Land, than to those which had no better  
 Foundation than the Humour of private Per-  
 sons. And certainly this they might say, tho’  
 at the same time they were clearly of the Opi-  
 nion, that there was nothing sinful impos’d.  
 What they said, no ways implies that the Im-  
 positions on either side, whether in the Church  
 of *England*, or among the Dissenters, might  
 not lawfully be comply’d with. It only im-  
 ports, that of the two they gave the Preference  
 to the former.

In his Explication of the Plea, he confines  
 the Hardships and Impositions spoken of to  
 Matters of Doctrine. Are there then Hard-  
 ships of no other kind among the Dissenters?  
 I am apt to think there are; and if there are,  
 Why might they not intend them? As to sub-  
 scribing the doctrinal Articles of the Church  
 of *England*, he very well knows that there was  
 the same Shew of Authority requiring them to  
 do this, as well if they continu’d among the  
 Dissenters, as if they conform’d; all ordain’d  
 Ministers among the Dissenters being obliged,  
 under very severe Penalties, to subscribe by the  
 Act



Act of Toleration. This therefore cannot be imply'd in the Hardships and Impositions re-  
ferr'd to by them, even as he himself has word-  
ed their Plea; for that most evidently supposes  
the Impositions mentioned, to be such as have  
not the Law of the Land, that Shew of Au-  
thority, as he calls it, for their Support. And  
if they meant not Subscription to the Articles  
on the one side, is it reasonable to suppose they  
shou'd intend it on the other? Is it not far  
more likely that the Hardships which they op-  
pos'd the one to the other, shou'd bear some  
kind of Analogy? Those Words which he has  
put into the Mouths of those Gentlemen who  
have lately conform'd, and seems to lay a Stress  
on, *it is better to do it once for all*, cou'd not,  
I am persuaded, make any part of their Plea;  
at least it's certain cou'd not be understood by  
them of subscribing the Articles; for the Mi-  
nisters of the Church of *England* do that not  
once, but several times. As to the Fact, Whe-  
ther these Persons have acted uprightly and sin-  
cerely in what they have done, or have impo-  
sed on the World, belied their Sentiments, and  
declared that to be true, which in their Con-  
sciences they are convinced is not so, I presume  
it's not cognizable by any human Judge, and  
must be left to the Searcher of Hearts, and  
Judge of all. For my own part, I make no  
doubt but they have acted with Integrity, and  
have declar'd and subscribed nothing as true,  
but what they thought to be so: And a small  
Share of Charity, one wou'd think, should lead  
every Man who has not undeniable Evidence  
of the contrary, to the same favourable Opi-  
nion of them. And till this Author can make

Proof that the Persons he is here speaking of, have not only pleaded for themselves in the manner he has represented them, but have also given the same Explication of their Plea as he has done; all which he, in this place, says, must pass for railing Accusation. If the Dissenters, like this Writer, make their own Party a Prison, abridge Men of the Liberty of being better inform'd, changing their Sentiments, and leaving *them* when they see Reason so to do; if they are angry with, and pass such heavy and severe Censures on those who conform (for such rash judging can proceed only from Envy or Resentment) it's most certain, that instead of being Friends and Defenders, they are in truth the Enemies and Betrayers of Liberty. I well know, a great part of the Dissenters have more generous Principle, think the worse of no Man for such an Alteration of his Opinion, and are consistent Assertors of Liberty both civil and ecclesiastical. Such, as I hitherto have, so I always shall continue highly to esteem and honour.

At the beginning of his Pamphlet, the Author complains heavily of a notorious Humour there has been of late Years, amongst some of the Dissenting Ministers, of conforming to the Establishment, which seems to have caught and run as other Humours amongst Men do. And tells us in another place, <sup>a</sup> that for the sake of contributing a little towards the stopping this Humour, he made his Reflexions upon the little Reason there is for quitting the Ministry

<sup>a</sup> P. 17.



among the Dissenters, and exercising it in the Church. The Distemper of a neighbouring Country, seems to run so much in this Gentleman's Mind, that even when he is talking of things entirely foreign, he describes it as naturally as tho' he felt it. I am afraid he has been too familiar with certain Strolers he mentions: <sup>b</sup> His Aversion to them, is full as strong as if he had received the Infection from them. If this be his Case, I heartily wish him well rid of it. The Reflections he has made, on which I intend a few Remarks, are usher'd in with a wondrous Preface. <sup>c</sup> " And yet, tho' " the number of such as have conformed, be " so small as Fifty, I must frankly acknow- " ledge, I cannot help admiring that it has " been so great; for in my mind, after having " view'd the Case all round, the Temptation " to Conformity is very weak; and a Man " must have a pretty strong Bias that way, " before he can find out any sufficient Reason " to justify it to himself." Since the Temptation to Conformity is so very weak, this alone one wou'd think shou'd have given him him Satisfaction, that it was not any sinister View, any worldly Motive, any low, mean and base End, that prevail'd with these Gentlemen to conform; but merely the Conviction of their own Minds, from the Reason of the Case, as it appear'd to them, that they saw it was a thing every way right and fitting for them to do, and therefore comply'd. His belief of the great Weakness of the Temptation, was not a slight or hasty matter, a rash, inconsiderate, and

<sup>b</sup> P. 31. apud fin.<sup>c</sup> P. 10.

ungrounded Perswasion wrought in him by Sur-  
 prize; no, it was what he was convinc'd of,  
 after long and mature Deliberation, after he  
 had well pois'd all Circumstances, and given  
 every thing its due Weight; in short, after he  
 had view'd the Case all round. This Refle-  
 ction, any reasonable Man wou'd be ready to  
 think, shou'd have cool'd his Resentment, en-  
 larged his Charity, and prevented those many  
 harsh and severe Sayings, which he has scatter'd  
 thro' his Book. But alas! So far is it from  
 having any such Effect, that while this is fresh  
 in his Memory, while it is yet warm in his  
 Thoughts, in the very same Breath, in the  
 very same Sentence, by adding Words of an un-  
 known Signification, like *Fawkes* the Jugler,  
 he deprives these Persons of all the Benefit they  
 might expect from it. The Temptation it's  
 true is very weak, *but they have a strong bias*  
*that way, without which they cou'd not see rea-*  
*son sufficient to justify their Conformity to them-*  
*selves.* I was a long time puzzling myself what  
 this same *Bias* should be, which is distinct from  
 every Temptation, and from the Reason of the  
 thing. Interest, Resentment, Pique, Rash-  
 ness, with his &c. at the end, Disgust and Pet,  
 with whatever else of the like kind he may  
 have nam'd as Motives to Conformity; these  
 surely, thinks I, must come here under the No-  
 tion of Temptation, because he says that after  
 he has view'd the Case all round, still in his  
 Mind the Temptation is very weak. Now it's  
 evident from his having mention'd those several  
 things, they are part of the Case, as he him-  
 self has view'd it. Nor cou'd I make out to  
 my self, how any of these things, if distin-  
 guish'd



guish'd from Temptations to Conformity, cou'd be a Bias to Conformity. The Reasonableness of complying with the Establishment, it cannot be ; because a Man must first have this strong Bias, before he can find out any sufficient Reason to justify it to himself. I had once almost concluded that it was the Itch of the Mind, *that running and catching Humour*, which he so gravely talks of at the beginning of this elaborate Piece ; but after I had read and consider'd his elegant Proæmium once more, I found it was asserted by halves only, and not with Force enough to make a *strong Bias* of it. He says, " he wou'd not be understood to insinuate that these Gentlemen have acted from " Whim, and without some Reason : " And the furthest Length he goes, is to pronounce, " That " as there are certain Humours of acting, which " at certain Times, prevail, as People follow " Fashions ; so there may be something of " this Inclination to do as others have done before them, in the present Case. " This *something of an Inclination*, I thought, wou'd not amount to a pretty strong Bias, especially when he seems to deny immediately before, that they acted from Whim, and without Reason. The word *pretty*, it must be own'd, lessens the Force of the word *strong*, pretty much ; but as it was perfectly a Secret to me, how much, I was afraid to trust it upon that bottom ; and the more so, because he is upon the Reserve, and does not speak out plainly, whether this Humour of Conforming be an Inclination in whole or in part, but only *that it may be something of*

*an Inclination.* After this I was almost tempted to believe, that the Author might be in the *Antinomian* Scheme, and imagine they are push'd on by a fatal Necessity. If not, I concluded it must be a cant Word to cast a Mist before the Eyes of the Reader, and make him believe he sees what he do's not. Shou'd none of these things hit off the Case, whenever he thinks proper to set me right, I shall acknowledge the Favour.

The Sentence which follows this will, I am perswaded, be unanimously adopted by those who have conform'd with the Change only of a very few Words. "The Merits of the Cause debated between the Church and Dissenters, are the same they have been for many Years last past; and I think it is a clear Case, that the Advantage of the Arguments lies mightily on our side, both in the Case of Ministerial and Lay-Conformity; for tho' there are Inconveniences and Defects in our Scheme, and no Scheme in this World will ever be perfectly clear of them, yet certainly we have much fewer than the Dissenters, and there are several Advantages in our Case, which theirs has not."

The past Debates have been so many, and manag'd by Persons of so great Parts and Learning on both Sides, that we may very well rest satisfied with them, and assure our selves there's little new can be said on the Subject. And a very improper time wou'd this be to renew the



Dispute, when all Hands may be so much more profitably engag'd against the common Adversaries of Christianity. As this Author has wrote but little, I shall write still less on those things which are controverted between the Church of *England* and the Dissenters. He spends something more than two Pages <sup>a</sup> on this Subject; and the Sum <sup>b</sup> of what he says is this: That the Dissenters have the Advantage over the Church of *England*, in that among them the People have the Choice of their own Ministers; a Power of preventing a Minister's being too independent on them; of consulting and determining concerning the best Measures for the Good of the Society; and of judging concerning the proper Subjects of their Communion. And these things alone, he says, are worth Dissenting for. I cannot be of his mind. Were all the four things mention'd real Advantages, they are not of that Consequence to be worth Dissenting for; but so far is it from being true that they are all Advantages, that two of the four are some of the greatest Inconveniences and Defects which the Dissenting Cause labours under: I mean the popular Choice, and great Dependance of their Ministers; both which have so many ill Effects, that, were I ask'd my Opinion concerning the Decay of the Dissenting Interest, I shou'd number these among its principal Causes: and without any Pretence to Prophecy, I shall venture to Affirm, that, if not remedied, they must at length entirely sink it. So sensible of

<sup>a</sup> P. 10, 11, 12.<sup>b</sup> P. 12.

the unhappy and dangerous Consequences here-  
of have been all the reformed Churches, that I  
know not any, except our Dissenters, and those  
which have sprung from them, that have left  
the Choice of the Minister in the Body of the  
People, or that suffer him to be dependant on  
them for his Maintenance. At the Close of  
this Subject, our Author adds " " From what  
" has been said it will appear, that there can-  
" not be much said from the Merits of the  
" Cause to lead Men to Conformity, who are  
" educated otherwise." Slender, surely are  
the Premises, by far too slender to support such  
a Conclusion.

How little has he enter'd into the Merits  
of the Cause to make this appear? The  
whole Amount of what he has said, is no  
more than this, That the Dissenters have the  
four above-mention'd Advantages over the  
Church of *England*. Two of which, should  
they be allow'd him, appear not to me of any  
great Moment, at least as they are manag'd  
among the Dissenters. And the other two are  
in truth very great Inconveniences, a Load  
which they'll not be able to bear up under.  
Are such Things as these sufficient to shew,  
that there cannot be much said from the Me-  
rits of the Cause to lead Men to Conformity?  
Of what mean Understanding must he take his  
Readers to be, if he thinks they'll be so easily  
convinc'd? I am apt to believe they must see  
other kind of Arguments, before they'll allow  
the Justness of his Conclusion. He asserts in-



ceed, that in the Controversy between the Church of *England* and the Dissenters, the Advantage of the Arguments lies mightily on the side of the latter, and refers to a certain Book with regard to the Case of Impositions, Subscriptions, Ceremonies, and Modes of Worship; the Author of which, as he hints in another Place,<sup>a</sup> is himself a Confutation of his own Remarks, having been afterwards convinced of the Fallacy of those Arguments he had made use of, and comply'd with the Things he wrote against. Assertions without Proof are, I hope, no proper Support of this Conclusion; and the Authority of a Person who has seen and recanted his Error, can be of no Weight; most certainly not in those Things wherein he acknowledges himself mistaken. What must we say then to that severe Censure which follows? How small is the Foundation on which it rests? Indeed, How entirely destitute is it of all Foundation? <sup>b</sup> "It can hardly be that they can do it from a Sense that it is their Duty so to do; only they can make a shift to make it easy to themselves." I am sure, if they have not done it from a Sense of their Duty, a hard shift it must be to make it easy to themselves. But, in the name of all that's good, What has he said to shew that they cou'd not do it from a Sense that it is their Duty so to do? Has he demonstrated that the Terms of Conformity are sinful? Has he proved that these Persons were convinc'd of their Sinfulness at the time they conform'd? If he has not

<sup>a</sup> P. 26;<sup>b</sup> P. 12,

done this latter as well as the former, he has done nothing. For if they believed that there was nothing sinful impos'd, a Prospect of Usefulness might easily persuade them that it was their Duty to comply. Has he so much as attempted to prove either of these Things? Has he not miserably fail'd in what he did attempt, which was to shew the Preferableness of Nonconformity? However, suppose he had succeeded; Let us for once take it for granted, that his Triumph is just, that he has accomplish'd the mighty Feats he boasts of, has been much too hard for the Church of *England*, and abundantly shewn the Preferableness of Nonconformity. Let us admit his Conclusion, *that it appears there cannot be much said from the Merits of the Cause, to lead Men to Conformity*. What then? Will it follow from thence, It can hardly be that they can do it from a Sense that it is their Duty so to do? Must what appears to him, and a few others, necessarily appear to all? Have all Persons the same bright Genius with himself, and see these Things as clearly as he does? Is there no room to be misled? Is it impossible the Arguments on the other side of the Question should make an Impression on weak Minds, and persuade them that it's their Duty to conform when it is not so? Or that the Wisest may be over-seen, and form a wrong Judgment. <sup>a</sup> Except he can

<sup>a</sup> Archbishop Tillotson was Educated in the Principles of the Nonconformists, and after the Restoration, comply'd with the Establish'd Church, when the Terms of Conformity were much harder than they are now.



shew that this was impossible, or was not the Fact, even tho' all he said before were true, it's evident the Sentence he here passes is a groundless Censure.

The next Paragraph, one wou'd think, shou'd reflect Honour on the Gentlemen who have lately conform'd; the Design of it being to prove, that there cannot *be a great deal expected in the way of Interest from Conformity.* This he labours for a whole Page; as much as if his Intention had been to have clear'd them entirely of all sordid Views in what they have done; notwithstanding even here he betrays his censorious Temper, and adds, *"Yet I fear, whether in some Cases this is not the first Mover in this Change."* Such is the Habit of Uncharitableness in this Author, that he can't forbear his ill-natur'd Reflections, even where his Subject leads him directly to the very contrary Conclusion. Surely either his Fear is vain, or his Labour lost. If his account of Patrons and their Inclinations be true, those who have conform'd must have been acquainted with it as well as our Author, because it concern'd them something more to get Information; and the Enquiry was not very difficult. If they knew the Fact was as he has represented it, it's evident Interest cou'd not be a Motive to their Conformity. And if the Fact be otherwise, to what Purpose are the Pains he has taken in this part of his Work? His professed Intention here is to *straiten* those dissenting Ministers who

are *warping* towards Conformity; to prevent their complying with the Establishment, by making it clear to them that they have nothing of temporal Interest to expect in it; but from his manner of Expression, one might be almost tempted to think, that he was sorry to find it so, and cou'd wish it were otherwise.

“<sup>b</sup> If we may judge, says he, by the Success of the greatest part of them that have tried this way, it will be pretty plain that *We* ought not to carry *Our* Expectations very high—And indeed, in Fact, Things have sometimes been so managed, as to shew they (*i. e.* I suppose Ecclesiastical Patrons) have not been over solicitous to draw *us* this way, unless fine Promises and delayed Performances have any great Influence.” This looks like complaining that the Price bidden is insufficient or ill paid; and that were the Bait more attractive, he and his Friends shou'd not stick to swallow it. I will not allow myself to say, or think, that this is our Author's Meaning; tho' I am persuaded such a Construction is full out as charitable as the Fear he here expresses concerning those who have lately conform'd. There are some fine Pieces of Reasoning in this Paragraph. In order to prove that those who have lately conform'd, can have no Expectation of Preferment from Bishops, or Deans, and Chapters, he says, “<sup>c</sup> Ecclesiasticks will assuredly be so faithful to the Interests of their own Body, as to be-

<sup>b</sup> P. 12. apud fin. & 133 ]

<sup>c</sup> P. 13.

“ stow



“ stow their Favour upon the Members of  
 “ it.” Which Reasoning evidently implies, that  
 those who from among the Dissenters have taken  
 Orders in the Church of *England*, are not  
 Members of the Ecclesiastical Body, *i. e.* are  
 not Clergymen; *i. e.* have not taken Orders in  
 the Church of *England*. What he means by  
 Members of the Ecclesiastical Body, as distin-  
 guish’d from Clergymen; and what he means  
 by being faithful, I am at a loss to know. In  
 my humble Opinion, I shou’d think that Ec-  
 clesiasticks are then most faithful to the Inte-  
 rests of their own Body, when they bestow  
 their Favour on those Members who are most  
 deserving it, whether originally educated in the  
 Church of *England*, or making a deliberate  
 Choice of that Church when they come to  
 Years of Maturity. A little after he adds, “  
 “ The best Preferments certainly will be pre-  
 “ served for other Hands (*i. e.* than those who  
 “ have left the Dissenters) for many Reasons,  
 “ which a common Understanding will readi-  
 “ ly suggest.” I must frankly acknowledge so  
 uncommon an Understanding is mine, that it  
 suggests to me no one Reason why they shou’d  
 be excluded, if they deserve as well as others.  
 Are they *Englishmen*? Why shou’d they not  
 enjoy the same Rights with other *Englishmen*?  
 Are they Clergymen? Why shou’d they be  
 debarr’d any Advantages which are allow’d to  
 other Clergymen? Is it because their Confor-  
 mity is Matter of Choice and not of Chance?  
 Is it because they have other and better Rea-

sons for complying with the Establishment, than the mere Force of Education? Have studied the Controversy, acted from Conviction, and are the more likely to support and defend the Cause they have espous'd? If these be not his Reasons, however they must suffice till he is pleased to communicate others. In more than one part of his Work, he has severe Reflections on the Clergy<sup>a</sup>; most of which might easily be retorted, were it worth the while; but as it is foreign to my present Purpose, I shall take no further notice of them; only observe how little Consequence there is in his Reasoning of this sort, in the Paragraph which lies now before us. “<sup>b</sup> If Advowsons, says he, continue to be engross'd by the Clergy, it seems to me to have so dangerous a Tendency to advancing that Power and Independency of the Clergy which some are so eager for, that it well deserves to be taken in Consideration, whether a Law to put some Bounds to this engrossing of Livings, may not be as necessary now to the Security of the State, as the Statute of *Mortmain* formerly.” I am apt to think it will puzzle him greatly to shew that such Incumbents as have been collated or presented by Ecclesiasticks, are less dependent on the State, than such as have been presented by Lay Patrons; or that a Clergymen after he is inducted, has more Dependence on an Ecclesiastick than on a Lay Patron. And till he can prove that the Crown, the Nobility, and other Persons possess'd of Advowsons, will be

<sup>a</sup> P. 23, 24, 25. 26.

<sup>b</sup> P. 13.

prevailed.



prevailed with to make a Sale of them, till he can shew that the Clergy have unluckily found some *Peruvian* Mine to enable them for the Purchase, he may rest easy with regard to their engrossing them. Cou'd he indeed have made out, that that they are striking at the King's Supremacy, and decline the Authority of the Civil Magistrate, there might have been room for Apprehension: But to imagine that a few Advowsons bought out of private Hands by the Colleges, can place the Clergy independent on the State, is a wild Thought; and to be frighted with the Ravings of a few, when it's well known the Body of the Clergy are in quite different Sentiments; when I doubt not but he himself will acknowledge, that there has not been a Set of better and more moderate Men in the Church since the time of the Reformation, is giving way to needless Terrors. It is indeed fashionable at this time to cry out against the Clergy, tho' there never was less Reason for it; and it's sufficiently obvious to every Man who has his Eyes in his Head, with what View the Cry is raised. Possibly this Gentleman may be of the Opinion of those who are against all Establishments of Religion; who think no one Sect of the Christian Religion ought to receive more Countenance from the Government than another; and that Christian Religion itself ought to be as little encourag'd by the Magistrate, as either *Pagan* or *Mahometan*. Should this ever be the Case in our Island, it's not difficult to foretel the Issue. He must be a great Stranger to Mankind, who does not see, that far

E

more.

more are governed by Authority, Example, and outward Shew, than by the Reason of the Case. That Party therefore which should be most industrious in making Profelytes, and have the greater Splendor, Pomp, and Appearance to draw them, wou'd soon compass a large Majority, and the Event must be a Return to Popery; which God of his infinite Mercy avert.

In the next Paragraph, this Author seems to have forgot the Limit he prescrib'd himself<sup>a</sup>, which was to go back no further than the Accession of his late Majesty. Either I have been a great Stranger to the World, or there have been very few such lamentable Outcries about the Peace of the Church, as he here<sup>e</sup> describes since that Period. And I never heard of one Person within that space of time, who profess'd he left the Dissenters upon this Account. As to the thing itself, it's most certain there always has been, and will be variety of Sentiments in the Christian Church; and that the only way to preserve Peace, is by following *St. Paul's* Rule, that neither Party censure, or despise the other, upon the account of their different Opinions. And had not our Author broke this Rule, by passing very harsh and severe Censures on those who differ from him, he had sav'd my Reader and me the present Trouble. It is the judging, censorious, as well as the proud domineering Spirit, which destroys the Peace of the Church; and very often they meet in the same Person.

<sup>a</sup> P. 5. prope fin.

<sup>e</sup> P. 14.



The Paragraph<sup>d</sup> which follows this may, I think, be wholly passed by, since he does not pretend that the Reason mention'd therein, was ever alledg'd by any one, as the Motive to his Conforming. To say that the present Constitution of the Church of *England* is perfect, wou'd be to contradict her self. To think it unalterable by Parliament, is a great mistake; but to judge what is fitting to be done, and when it's seasonable to attempt it; these Persons, I am perswaded, most willingly leave to those whose proper Business it is.

The next Paragraph is fill'd with *Considerations of small Moment indeed*.<sup>e</sup> " If these Gentlemen succeed, and are taken notice of in the Church, the Consequence will be, and in Fact is, that many of her *native* Sons will hate them, and envy them, as standing in *their* Places, and eating their Bread. This will give a generous Mind some inward Chagrin." Were he put to the Proof of this Fact, possibly he might produce two or three Clergymen of no great Consideration, who may have used some such unwary and inconsiderate Expression, as, that these Gentlemen stand in *their* Places, and eat *their* Bread; whose Consciences probably at the same time, smote them for the unreasonableness of what they said, and the Envy whence it flow'd. The Complaint is much of the same strain, with that of the two old Women, who re-

<sup>d</sup> P. 15.<sup>e</sup> P. 16.

ceiv'd Alms of the Parish, and were heard to  
 say one to the other in the late King's time,  
 These are hard Times indeed; Ay, God knows,  
 these are hard times, all *OUR* Money goes  
 over to *Hanover*. Were the Places spoken  
 of, the Property of those who made the Com-  
 plaint? Or suppose the Gentlemen who now  
 possess them, had never conform'd, were the  
 Complainants secure of having been presented  
 to them? If either Law or Reason confine  
 the Presentation of Benefices to those who  
 were born in the Church of *England*, (for those  
 I suppose he means by her *native* Sons) no  
 doubt these Persons, if of that number, justly  
 complain. But on the other hand, if there's  
 no good Reason to exclude such as having been  
 born of Dissenting Parents, are desirous, when  
 they come to Years of Maturity, and capable of  
 understanding the Controversy, and determining  
 for themselves, to comply with the Establish-  
 ment, where is the Wrong done, and what the  
 least ground is there for Complaint? And if  
 unreasonable Complaints proceeding from  
 Envy, must give a Man inward Chagrin, a  
 Person in any considerable Station, can ex-  
 pect but little Ease in this World. Our Au-  
 thor proceeds " Again, a great deal as to their  
 " Acceptance with their new Friends, will  
 " depend upon what they see to be their Car-  
 " riage towards their old ones. If they ne-  
 " glect us, and break off all free friendly inter-  
 " course with us, then the Party they are  
 " gone over to will carefs and hug them as  
 " their dear Friends, especially if they can  
 " throw out a virulent Reflection now and  
 " then



“ then upon the Dissenters ; but then if they  
 “ have any Gratitude or Generosity in their  
 “ Tempers, they must abhor themselves in-  
 “ wardly for doing so. But if they continue  
 “ to speak handsomely and honourably of us ;  
 “ if they are willing to live with us, and carry  
 “ toward us in a friendly Christian Manner ;  
 “ they will be look’d upon shyly, and with  
 “ coldness, and deemed false Brethren, by a  
 “ great many. In a word, it is at best but an  
 “ awkward uneasy Situation they are got into,  
 “ and much good may it do them.”

The Fact, I take it, is just the Contrary ;  
 I mean in general, for I will not pretend to  
 answer for all the Particulars. No Man of  
 Generosity and Goodness, will esteem these or  
 any Persons the better, either for their ill Man-  
 ners or ill Nature. And Men of Sense do,  
 and will value them the more, for giving all  
 due Praise to those they have left, *for speaking  
 handsomely and honourably of them, and carry-  
 ing it towards them in a friendly Christian Man-  
 ner* ; and will thence justly conclude, that it  
 was not Pique or Resentment drove them a-  
 way from the Dissenters, but the Conviction  
 of their own Judgments led them to conform.  
 As to the Situation they are got into, they are  
 very well pleas’d with it, and not the less so,  
 that this Gentleman after all the hard Censures  
 he has pass’d upon them, professes not to envy  
 them in it.

I have now consider’d all the Reflections he  
 has made to stop the Humour of Conforming.

i

And

And shou'd any Dissenting Ministers, who are as he says warping that way, happen to read this, all I have further to say to them is, that having well studied their Bible, they wou'd make themselves Masters of what has been written by the Fathers, during the three first Centuries; and then, having fully examin'd the Controversy between the Church of *England* and the Dissenters, determine and act as they see Reason. God forbid they shou'd conform, if their Consciences are against it. And on the other hand, God forbid they shou'd be tempted to stay with the Dissenters against their own Judgment, from any unreasonable Apprehensions this Author may have thrown in their way. If they'll take my Opinion, there's nothing said by him need deter them; they may be sure of a kind Reception, and all fitting encouragement from Men of Sense and Learning in the Establishment.

I am not conscious to myself, that I have dropp'd any word in this Writing, which may justly offend the Dissenters; if I have, I revoke it as wholly undesign'd. I shall always retain a great and tender Regard for the whole Body of Protestant Dissenters, and earnestly desire that the Act of Toleration may for ever continue in its full Force. Nor shou'd I have prevail'd with myself to have said what I have done, had I not thought it necessary to the Defence of those who are most unjustly arraign'd and condemn'd by this Author. Had the several harsh and severe Reflections he has made been pass'd over in Silence, it might have looked



looked as tho' they were conscious of, and acquiesced in what he has said, and been construed as owning the Guilt wherewith they are charged. What must my Lords the Bishops have thought, who were so kind to give them Holy Orders? In justice therefore to their Lordships, to shew that they were not impos'd on, and drawn into an Opinion of them which they did not deserve, as well as in Vindication of the Gentlemen themselves, I cou'd not suffer this Book to pass without Contradiction.

F I N I S.







